

# LOVE AFFAIRS OF AN ADMIRAL.

Captain Mahan's Life of Nelson a Rare Addition to Letters.

MRS. NISBET: LADY NELSON.

Strange Disregard of Consequences in His Infatuation for Her.

LADY HAMILTON'S INFLUENCE.

Europe Mocked the Man It Revered for the Power of This Woman Over Him.

Lady Nelson.

Seldom, indeed, does an American historical work attract as much attention or receive as high praise as "The Life of Nelson," by Captain A. T. Mahan, of the United States Navy, which has recently come from the press of Little, Brown & Company, and bids fair to take permanent rank, not only as a work of great historical value, but also as a piece of genuine literature.

Of course the name of Nelson suggests that of Lady Hamilton, and not the least interesting part of Captain Mahan's work is that portion which is devoted to her and to the Mrs. Nisbet, who became Lady Nelson. The following excerpts, republished by kind permission of Little, Brown & Company, give a certain insight into the



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great Admiral in his capacity of lover and husband, and also show what manner of woman it was that succeeded in winning and holding his complete regard.

The first paragraph is interesting because it refers to an attachment of his younger days, of which little has heretofore been printed.

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"Health, that greatest of blessings, is what I never fully enjoyed until I saw fair Canada. The change it has wrought, I am convinced, is truly wonderful." This happy result has been due, in part, at least, to surroundings that told favorably upon his sensitive nervous system, and not the least of these was the presence of a woman who occupied a position of great importance in his life. He had been actively occupied, and had fallen deeply in love with a fair Canadian, a woman whom his ardent imagination threw that glamour of exaggerated charm in which he saw all who were dear to him, except his wife. Her he seems from the first to have looked upon with affection, indeed, but without rapture or illusion. The Canadian affair came near ending in an imprudent offer, from which he was with difficulty deterred by a cool-headed friend. The story runs that the ship being ordered to New York and ready for sea, he had bidden her good-bye and gone on board, expecting to sail next day; but that, unable to bear the approaching separation, he returned to the city, and was on his way to the lady's home when his friend met him.

Mrs. Nisbet very quickly made something of him. Little direct description has been transmitted to us concerning the looks or characteristics of the woman who, now, at the time when marriage was possible to him, the misfortune to appear in the line of succession of Nelson's early fancies, and to attract the too easily aroused admiration and affection of a man whose attachment she had not the inherent power to bind. That Nelson was naturally inconstant, beyond the volatility inherent in youth, is sufficiently disproved by the strength and endurance of his devotion to the one woman in whom he either found or imagined the qualities that appealed to the heroic side of his character.

How completely she mastered all the approaches to his heart, and retained her supremacy, once established, to the end, is evidenced by the whole tenor of his correspondence with her, by the mention of her in letters to others, by the recorded expressions he used in speaking to or about her. Despite all that he certainly knew of her, and much more that it is unreasonable to doubt he must have known of her history, there is no mistaking the profound

ble of such energetic manifestation—to fulfill the imagination of one who could cast himself at the feet of an ideal—was beyond the gentle, well-ordered and somewhat prosaic charms with which alone Mrs. Nisbet was invested by Nelson, even when most lovable in tone. "My greatest wish," he writes in the first of his letters to her, that has been preserved, "is to be united to you; and the foundation of all conjugal happiness, real love and esteem is, I trust, what you believe I possess in the strongest degree toward you."

Fifteen months later, and but a short time before their wedding, he says: "His Royal Highness often tells me he believes I am married, for he never saw a lover so easy or so little of the object he has a regard for. When I tell him I certainly am not, he says, 'Then he is sure I must have a great esteem for you, and that it is not what is (vulgarly) I do not must like the use of that word—called love. He is right; my love is founded on esteem, the only foundation that can make the passion last.' But general maxims, even when less disputable than this, do not admit of universal application; and if an affection was to hold its own in a nature enthusiastic and imaginative as that of Nelson, it had need to strike root deeper than that surface soil indicated by mere esteem, at least when the latter rests simply upon an assemblage of upright and amiable qualities, and not upon that force of character, which compels dependence as well as appreciation. At their last parting he solemnly promised that his esteem was not lessened; while he was destined to be afforded a conspicuous illustration of how enduring a passion may flourish where no just title to esteem exists.

Lady Hamilton. Emma, Lady Hamilton, the second wife of Sir William, was at this time thirty-three years old, her husband being sixty-eight. Her name when first entering the world was Amy Lyon. Born in Cheshire of extremely poor parents, in the humblest walk of life, she had found her way up to London, while yet little more than a child, and there, having a beautiful face, much natural charm of manner and disposition, utterly unexperienced and with scarcely any moral standards—of which her life through-out shows little trace—she was speedily ruled—fell so far, in fact, that even with all her attractions it seemed doubtful whether any man would own himself responsible for her condition or befriend her.

"In these circumstances, when not yet seventeen, she was taken up by a nephew of Sir William Hamilton—Mr. Charles Greville—who recognized not merely her superficial loveliness, but something of the mental and moral traits underlying it, which promised a capacity for development into an interesting and affectionate household companion. Upon her promises of amendment, in the matter of future relations with men, and of submission to his guidance and wishes in the general conduct of her life, he took her in charge and the two lived together for nearly four years.

"Greville bestowed a good deal of pains upon her training, and was rewarded, not only by gratitude and careful compliance with his directions, but by her sincere and devoted affection. The girl became heartily and fondly in love with him, finding both contentment and happiness in the simply ordered home provided for her.

"The future Lady Hamilton was affectionate and impulsive, good humored, with generous instincts and a quick temper, but she was also ambitious and exceptionally clever. She loved Greville warmly, but she took to heart the hard truths of his teachings, and they sank deep into a congenial soil. Under the influence of the two motives she applied herself to gain, and did gain, a certain degree of external neatness and self-control. Her affection for Greville made her willing, for his sake, to accept modest surroundings and to discard whatever was coarse in a society or becoming in her own person or conduct.

"In 1782 Hamilton's first wife died, and in 1784 he came to England on leave. There he met Amy Lyon, now known as Emma Hart, in the house provided for her by Greville. His admiration of her was extreme, and his tendency was not misinterpreted by her. He returned to his post at Naples at the end of the year. In the course of 1785 Greville, who was now in his thirty-sixth year, decided that the condition of his fortune made it imperative for him to marry, and that as a first step thereto he must break with Emma Hart.

"Her influence over him (Lord Hamilton) exceeded all belief," wrote a mutual friend to Greville in March, 1791. "His attachment exceeds admiration; it is perfect devotion." Shortly after this letter was written the two went to England, and there they were married on the 6th of September, 1791. By the end of the year they were back

in Naples, and did not again leave Italy up to the time of Nelson's arrival in 1798.

"She was a brave, capable, full-blooded, efficient woman, not to be daunted by fears and scruples; a woman who, if only nerve and intelligence were required, and if distinction for herself were at stake, could be fairly depended upon. There was in her make-up a good deal of pagan virtue. She could admire and appreciate heroism, and under the stimulus of excitement, of self-consciousness, of the glitter of effective performance and the applause of onlookers, she was quite capable of heroic action. It was this daring spirit, coarsely akin to much that was best in himself, and of which she made good use under her own eyes, that Nelson recognized; and this, in the thought of the writer, was the body of truth, from which his enthusiasm, encouraged by her charms and by her tenderness toward himself, projected such a singular phantasm of romantic perfections.

"Unhappily, Nelson was not able to stand the heavy dose of flattery administered by a woman of such conspicuous beauty and consummate art, nor was his taste discriminating enough to experience and wholeheartedly revolt against the raucousness of the draught she offered him. \* \* \* Not that the Lady Hamilton of reality was utterly different from the Lady Hamilton of his imagination. That she ever loved him is doubtful; but there were in her spirit impulses capable of sympathetic response to his own in his bravest acts, though not in his noblest motives. It is inconceivable that duty ever appealed to her as it did to him, nor could it be expected that the ability of character have dragged a man of Nelson's masculine renown about England and the Continent till he was the object of all beholders; but on the other hand, it never could have occurred to the energetic, courageous, brilliant Lady Hamilton, after the fifty deeds and stirring dramatic scenes of St. Vincent, to beg him, as Lady Nelson did, to leave boarding to captains.

In Lady Nelson's letters there is evidence enough of a somewhat colorless and unmeasured, yet bestowed by one who had the power by the admission of even unfriendly critics of being a really and genuinely good person. He was soon at her feet."

"That such intimacy and such relations resulted in no influence upon the Admiral's public action is not to be believed. That he consciously perverted his views is improbable, but that he saw duty under other than normal lights is not only probable, but evident. \* \* \* The court, or, rather, the Queen, through Lady Hamilton, took possession of him.

"That Naples should co-operate in the general movement against Nelson was right, although, as Nelson well knew, she had never dared to do so under much more favorable conditions—a fact which by itself should have suggested to him that she should act alone, with the idea of precipitating war, refusing to await the moment fixed by the principle of the war, was folly. This, however, was the course determined upon, under the combined impulse of the Queen, Lady Hamilton and Nelson.

The result was the overthrow of the royal Government in Naples.

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